



INJURY PREVENTION IN NURSING HOMES

A “best practices” musculoskeletal injury prevention program in nursing homes reduces resident handling injuries and violence by residents toward caregivers while showing a three-year recovery of the costs of the program through reduced workers’ compensation costs.

Background

Lifting patients is the leading cause of work-related injury for nursing personnel. Collins et al. (2004)¹ studied the effects of a “best practices” musculoskeletal injury prevention program, which included the use of mechanical lifts and reposition aids, a zero lift policy and training for employees on how to use the equipment. Data were collected from six nursing homes for three years before and three years after the program was introduced, for a total of six years. There was a significant decline in resident handling injury rates and in the frequency of repeat injuries after the program was implemented. The nursing staff’s lost work days for resident handling injuries declined from 5.8 to 2.0 days per 100 full-time equivalents and their workers’ compensation claims for these injuries decreased from 14.0 to 5.9 claims per 100 full-time equivalents. The use of lift equipment was also associated with a reduction in injuries related to resident violence toward caregivers during resident handling tasks. Workers’ compensation claims for such injuries declined by 72 per cent after the program was introduced. The initial capital investment in equipment and training was recovered in slightly less than three years through decreased workers’ compensation expenses.

Bottom Line

- A “best practices” musculoskeletal injury prevention program that provides a safe way to handle and move residents reduces the rate and severity of injuries to caregivers in nursing homes and may increase staff retention.
- Investing in a “best practices” musculoskeletal injury prevention program would yield net savings for the health-care system by reducing costs related to resident handling injuries to nursing personnel.
- Staff recruitment to nursing homes may become easier as work conditions become safer and less stressful.

¹ Collins, J. W., Wolf, L., Bell, J., & Evanoff, B. (2004). An evaluation of a “best practices” musculoskeletal injury prevention program in nursing homes. *Injury Prevention, 10*, 206-211.